Department of LABOR AND INDUSTRIES

ERGONOMICS
Worker Protection

Ergonomics demonstration project: Masonry

Need

The masonry industry has a high rate of Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders (WMSDs). Masonry work involves several risk factors, including heavy lifting and repetitive motions. The industry is one of the first 12 that must comply with the rule.

For years, lifting heavy masonry blocks, scaffolding and other heavy materials has been recognized as a leading cause of WMSDs in the industry. To reduce these and other injuries, in 2000 the Department of Labor & Industries formed a working group focused on evaluating and reducing WMSD hazards related to masonry installation, finishing, and stocking.

Goals

The goals of the masonry project are to demonstrate that industry can:

- Familiarize L&I ergonomists with masonry industry tasks, and become familiar with the requirements of the Ergonomics Rule.
- Identify hazard zone jobs in the masonry industry as performed today.
- Identify Best/Acceptable Practices for the masonry industry that can be used by employers/workers to comply with the Ergonomics Rule.
- Develop and distribute a document describing Best/Acceptable Practices for the masonry industry.
- Provide examples of ergonomic risk factors, hazards and controls to use in L&I training workshops for the construction industry. All of the products from the project will also be available for industry use to develop training materials.

Project design

The project team included representatives from labor, employers, manufacturing and L&I staff. The group evaluated masonry tasks in the block, brick and tile trades, including masons, tile setters and hodcarriers. This included installation, finishing, and stocking.

The first phase involved educating industry representatives about risk factors and hazards specified in the ergonomics rule. Industry representatives educated L&I staff on the tasks and hazards of the trade. L&I ergonomists visited work sites to become familiar with these tasks, interview workers, and take photographs and video. The group meets monthly to identify and review risk factors, discuss proposed solutions, and develop the "Masonry Best/Acceptable Practices" report.

The team plans to distribute the "Masonry Best/Acceptable Practices" report through industry associations and L&I. Examples of trade-specific risk factors and controls gathered from the site visits will be available as part of a searchable database on the L&I ergonomics web site. The same examples will be used in L&I workshops for the construction industry.

Members of the work group recognize that the construction industry will continue to evolve. The team will reconvene as necessary to evaluate new risks and hazards and identify ways to reduce WMSDs involving masonry work.

Timetable

Sept 2000 .....Held initial Meeting
Oct 2000 .....Established project goals, cross-trained team members
July 2001 .....Drafted “Masonry Best/Acceptable Practices” report
Nov 2001 .....Complete final “Masonry Best/Acceptable Practices” report
Nov 2001 .....Begin using masonry examples in construction industry workshops
Dec 2001 .....Assemble photos and video for L&I web site

Results

The project will result in three products the construction industry can use to implement the rule:

- “Masonry Best/Acceptable Practices” report. The report will contain separate sections for masonry bricklayers (block and brick), hodcarriers, finishers, and tile setters.
- A variety of materials for training and education, such as tip sheets and risk factor/control examples.
- Photos and video of Best/Acceptable Practices for masonry trades on the L&I ergonomics web site.